HEALTH EQUITY ROUND TABLE
Barriers and Obstacles of Language Access on the IDD Community

Abstract

This document provides an overview of PCCS' quarterly Health Equity Roundtable. During this roundtable, panelists discussed the barriers in receiving services due to lack of language access and shared first-hand stories about the obstacles they faced in receiving services for themselves and their loves ones. This roundtable will discuss the survey data collected by PCCS on language access in New York amongst agencies that provide services to people with disabilities.

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Staten Island Performing Provider System Collaborating Partner

RE: Health Equity Roundtable Quarter 2 Summary Report

Topics discussed:

Person Centered Care Services hosted our second Health Equity Roundtable on September 29, 2021 at 1pm via Zoom. The topic discussed was *Health Equity Roundtable: Barriers and Obstacles of Language Access for People with Disabilites*. During this roundtable, we met with Language Access Allies and self-advocates and caregivers that do not speak English at their first language, as they outlined and discussed the barriers and obstacles they faced in receiving services due to language barriers.

Organizational Attendees: Panelists included:

- Jacqueline Hayes, PHD
- Cynthia Stewart
- Jenny Munoz
- Nicole Weinstein
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The event was hosted by Nisha Tumber, Director of Special Initiatives, and co-hosted by cRis marchioNNe, Executive Director, Alexa Donnelly, Deputy Executive Director, and Alyssa D'Agosto, Communications Manager.

Ongoing Challenges and barriers for people with IDD:

During the panel, participants were given the opportunity to take part in break out rooms with the panelists to discuss specific topics. The breakout rooms had the following topics:

- Cynthia Stewart
  - What are some best practices for language planning for the intersection of IDD and language access? What will you include in the plan? (Monitoring and evaluation of the plan actually working)
- Jenny Munoz
  - How can we reach families that don't speak English as a first language that need to receive services?
  - What are some ideas around recruiting bilingual DSP's and supporting them to get certified as formal interpreters?
- Nicole Weinstein and Jacqueline Hayes
  - How can we find resources for Language Access in our area or online?

In the breakout rooms during the event, participants/panelists were asked to formulate a "call to action" plan on the specific topics to brainstorm on the next steps on how we can best advocate for people with disabilities. Ideas were posted on a [jamboard](#) and shared after the breakout rooms returned to the main room. When discussing the Language Access barriers amongst people with disabilities in the Staten Island community, attendees expressed concern in recognizing the existing Language Access resources available for families and providers, and the lack of research available on the impacts of language access on people with disabilities. Furthermore, participants brainstormed a way for provider agencies to implement language access tools within their workplace to ensure language access for all.

Call for Action/Action Steps

In order to best advocate for and support IDD providers, families and self-advocates, we must:

1. Training providers on language access
2. Reaching immigrant families that may need services for their loved ones
3. Advocacy and Accountability for Language Access

Recognizing Available Language Access Laws and Resources

The ongoing challenges and barriers for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are not limited to just the accessibility of Language Access Resources, but also in the overall impacts that lack of language access amongst provider agencies. Panelists and attendees, alike, discussed the need for language resources implemented in their agency's language access plan. Understanding the law and legislation associated with language access is important in understanding that legality and importance of language access. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 13166, and Executive Order 26 are legislative policies that have been passed that discuss language access. In order to support individuals who speak English as a Second Language, the Office of New Americans has launched the Ramirez June Initiative and also set up a hotline that is available in up to 200+ languages.

Resources

- Office of New American Language Access Hotline: (800)-566-7636
- [Ramirez June Initiative](#)
- [Executive Order 26](#)

Recruiting Bilingual Direct Support Professionals

In order to best combat language access inequities and to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, it is important to recruit bilingual Direct Support Professionals. Bilingual DSP's can help bridge the communication gap and can properly support an individual with a disability. Recruiting bilingual DSP's will open up the job market to a select population of people that would otherwise not have access to proper employment, whilst supporting an

individual with a disability. Our panelist, Tina, shared her story about receiving supports for her young daughter when English was not her first language. She outlined the difficulties and barriers she faced in just applying for services. Tina shared that she wished that there was someone who spoke her language that would be able to support her and her daughter. DSP support is not just limited to the person with the disability, but also the entire family.

Resources

- [Example of How to Connect Bilingual DSP's to loved one's/people supported](#)

Lack of Research

One recommendation made amongst panelists in analyzing and recognizing the need for Language Access in an agency was to do a survey and to ensure that they survey is offered in multiple languages. Jacqueline Hayes shared a wealth of resources in helping an agency become Language Access-compliant. By surveying those that you support in your agency and beginning to gauge all the different languages spoken, you are one step closer to bridging the communication gap. There is a lack of research, across the United States, regarding the impact that lack of language access has had on individuals with IDD. There is very limited research available in understanding the impacts that language access has on LEP individuals with IDD. Research can be very telling in showing the long-lasting impacts and health disparities faces by these individuals when English is not their first language.

Resources

- [Census Reporter](#): Utilize this tool to see which languages are predominantly spoken in your zip code
- [Language Access Guide to Providing Effective Communication and Language Assistance Services](#): The Guide will help your organization communicate in a way that considers the cultural, health literacy, and language needs of patients, but can also be used within any agency to begin to create one's own language access guide.
- [Methods for Determining the Concentration and Characteristics of Limited English Proficient (LEP) Communities](#)
- [Guide for Improving Website Access for LEP Persons](#)

Advocacy and Accountability

How can we overcome communication barriers with language access to ensure that people with IDD receive the same quality of services regardless of difference in language? Ask your respective agencies what language access plan they have in place to ensure that everyone has access to proper treatment. It is written law that agencies have language access plans put in place, so hold those that aren't in compliance with this law accountable! We must continue to advocate for the language access in communities where English is not their first language, but we must also educate and prepare those communities for best practices to ensure equity amongst all.

Resources

- [New York Community of Practice on Cultural and Linguistic Competence in Developmental Disabilities](#): The Mission of the NY CoP on Cultural and Linguistic

Competence in Developmental Disabilities is to increase access to information about the Developmental Disabilities Network, Developmental Disabilities services, supports, and individual rights through outreach, training, and education for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families who have limited English proficiency (LEP).

- [Existing NYS agencies Language Access Plans](): Scroll down to see examples of Language Access plans in state agencies. Agencies must update their plans every two years.
- [Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964]()
- [OPWDD Language Access Information for Providers]()